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On Other Pages

East German Pastors Sentenced.	Page 2
US Reformed Church Asks East-West Communication.	Page 2
Dutch Reformed Church Protests Archbishop's Charges.	Page 2
Irish Methodists Oppose Ordination of Women.	Page 3
Swiss Protestant Federation Meets.	Page 3
Second Ecumenical Essay Competition Announced.	Page 3
Saxony Synod Studies Problem of Youth Dedication.	Page 4

Document

Statement on Church and Press.	Page 5
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WCC Official Cables Greek Archbishop Concerning Cyprus

(Geneva) - On June 14, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, cabled the Archbishop of Athens that "Christians everywhere heard with sorrow news of civil strife in Cyprus and pray for rapid, just and peaceful settlement. World Council officers will continue doing everything they can for this purpose."

At the same time, Metropolitan James of Melita, the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the World Council, cabled the Patriarch, saying "Officers of World Council have instructed me to convey to you the expression of their thoughts and prayers".

The two messages followed a request received by the council from the Archbishop of Athens asking sister churches to use their influence to end attacks on Greek Cypriots. "The Church of Greece," the Archbishop cabled, "beseeches that God Almighty will strengthen the badly-tried Greek Cypriots and prays that soon may come days of freedom, joy and peace for them. We hope that our sister churches will do the same."

A cable to the World Council from Bishop Anthimos of Kitium, acting Ethnarch of Cyprus, reported that one Greek Orthodox church had been burned and many Greek families were homeless. "We warmly appeal to you to use your high influence so that an end may be put to this unbearable situation," he said. E.P.S., Geneva

East German Pastors Sentenced

(Berlin) - Two East German pastors and a parish worker have been sentenced to prison in the German Democratic Republic (DDR).

Pastor Willy Kohl, 67, of Nossen, Kreis Meissen, received a three-and-a-half year sentence for "dealings with the West, disparaging the DDR and general agitation along the same lines as Bishop Dibelius". Pastor Kohl was arrested on November 15, 1957, because, officials said, he refused to bury a woman in the church cemetery "because she was a member of a Communist collective farm". The Nossen church said burial had been refused because the woman did not live in the community, but in a neighbouring town where there was a community cemetery. However, at the request of her family, she was buried in the Nossen churchyard.

Sentences have also been passed against Pastor Hardy Horn from Bergen, Kreis Auersbach, Saxony, and Fräulein Mischok, a catechist. Pastor Horn was sentenced to four months' imprisonment for remarks made about the government-sponsored "youth dedications", and Fräulein Mischok will go to prison for three months for boxing a child's ears because he tried to disturb the lesson by throwing snowballs.

E.P.S., Geneva

US Reformed Church Asks East-West Communication

(Buck Hill Falls) - Both the World Council of Churches and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA have been asked by the Reformed Church in America to keep the communication channels open between churches of the East and West.

The request was made by the 152nd annual General Synod of the Reformed Church, meeting this month at Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania. The synod said that communication between East and West was needed so that the Church "may exert her influence toward developing mutual respect and trust among nations".

E.P.S., Geneva

Dutch Reformed Church Protests Archbishop's Charges

(Cape Town) - The Dutch Reformed Church has announced its withdrawal from a proposed all-church conference in South Africa, scheduled for December, because of criticism voiced by the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, the Most Rev. Joost de Blank, during a lecture tour in the United States.

Preaching in New York early this month, Archbishop de Blank is reported to have criticised the practice and theory of the Dutch Reformed Church. "It is a sad commentary on the work of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa," Dr. de Blank said, "that it spends a great deal of money on missionary work but believes in keeping African and White congregations apart. It has a warped and inaccurate Calvinistic outlook."

Replying, the executive committee of the Dutch Reformed Church said it "would be sheer hypocrisy for the Dutch Reformed Church to continue with the discussion in the present circumstances".

The purpose of the proposed all-church conference in December is to discuss fundamental differences between churches in South Africa. The Dutch Reformed Church has taken a leading part in planning the conference.

Replying to the Dutch Reformed action, Dr. de Blank said he felt that all South African churches had failed in their job, but that only the Dutch Reformed Church had given its "tacit approval" to apartheid. The Dutch Reformed Church, he said, "contributes more money to missions and African education than all the

other churches in South Africa put together. But they have got their Calvinistic outlook wrong. Calvinistic churches in Europe and elsewhere do not see eye to eye with them on apartheid. They have not resisted apartheid legislation. That is not a matter of opinion. It is a fact. I do not and never have impugned their sincerity. But I think the members of the Dutch Reformed Church are misguided in their approach."

Meanwhile, other church groups in South Africa have criticised the Archbishop's statements. The Church of England in South Africa - a small group which broke away from the Anglican Church of the Province of South Africa years ago - is considering withdrawal from the all-church conference. Dr. R.H.R. Liddell, moderator of the Presbyterian Church, said that his denomination "deprecated" the Archbishop's statement and "condemned" it because of the Calvinistic background shared by his church and the Dutch Reformed Church. "For any church to criticise the theology of another is in our view uncalled for," he said. E.P.S., Geneva

Irish Methodists Oppose Ordination of Women

(Belfast) - The Methodists of Ireland are overwhelmingly opposed to the ordination of women as ministers, according to a poll among the church's seven districts. Announced at the denomination's annual meeting in Belfast, the survey showed that 2,800 voters found women "unacceptable" as pastors or thought it would be "inexpedient" to ordain them. There were 1,370 members who said they found no "theological bar" to women ministers.

Six of the districts reported that no circuit would accept a woman pastor, while the seventh said that two of its 37 circuits would accept a woman.

E.P.S., Geneva

Swiss Protestant Federation Meets

(Zurich) - At its annual meeting from June 8 - 10, at Thusis, near Zurich, the Swiss Protestant Federation urged delegates to continue their efforts to have civilian service recognised for conscientious objectors as an alternative to military service.

In other action the federation named a committee to examine the problem of nuclear arms for Switzerland and to present its findings to a special meeting which will be held in the next few months. Plans for a national Protestant broadcasting station in Switzerland will be re-examined by a special commission working with a planning committee which has existed for several months (see EPS Nos. 13 and 14).

Professor H. d'Espine of Geneva was unanimously re-elected as federation president. E.P.S., Geneva

Second Ecumenical Essay Competition Announced

(Geneva) - The second Ecumenical Essay Competition, sponsored by the World Council of Churches' Scholarship Committee, has been announced this week.

"The Prophetic Function of the Church in Society" is the theme of the competition, and the deadline for entries is September 30, 1959. The competition is open to anyone under 40 years of age engaged in full-time pastoral or missionary service. First prize is 1,000 Swiss francs (\$230).

Purpose of the competition is to "encourage younger clergy and ministers to engage in the study of some of the central biblical and theological issues under ecumenical discussion and to make available the best results of the study".

Further information is available from the WCC's Scholarship Committee, 17, route de Malagnou, Geneva, Switzerland. E.P.S., Geneva

Saxony Synod Studies Problem of Youth Dedication

(Berlin) - The Synod of the Evangelical Church in Saxony has named a committee to work out suggestions that would enable children who have had to take part in the East German government-sponsored "youth dedication" services to receive religious instruction and to continue in church membership.

The Saxony synod was one of the first of Germany's regional churches to meet since the All-German Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) suggested in April that member churches in both East and West Germany set up new regulations governing confirmation (see EPS No. 18).

Bishop Johannes Jänicke told the synod that the atheistic character of the youth dedications was being stressed more and more and it was therefore incompatible with confirmation. But, on the other hand, he said, some way must be found not to exclude young people from church life if, for the sake of their careers, they could not avoid attending the youth dedication programmes.

E.P.S., Geneva

In Brief

Pastor Etienne Mathiot of France, sentenced on March 14 to eight months' imprisonment for aiding an agent of the Algerian rebel National Liberation Front (FLN), has been freed (see EPS Nos. 10 and 11).

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Bishop Albert Bereczky has been elected ministerial president of the Hungarian Reformed Church by the General Convent, the church's highest administrative body. Others named to new posts were Dr. Thomas Esze, prominent church historian, lay president of the church, and Dr. Stephen Gaal, a former deputy bishop of the Transtiscian District, director of the office of the General Convent.

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The June 7 issue of "Réforme", Protestant newspaper published in Paris, has been confiscated in Algeria. The editors do not know which article caused the action.

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The La Plata Synod of the German Evangelical Church in Argentina reports an increasing shortage of pastors. Because theological students training at the two Protestant Faculties in Argentina have not completed their studies, the synod says it has been unable to fill a number of vacancies.

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In a message to Protestants in Algeria, the Regional Council of the French Reformed Church in Algeria says that it is "delighted" about signs of reconciliation between North Africans and Europeans, and "once more asks all believers to make a real effort to fulfil their task of reconciliation and not to give up working for equal peace and justice for all".

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At its meeting in Berlin on June 12 - 13, the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) set up a committee, led by Vice-President Lücking of Bielefeld, to study the agreement on Protestant military chaplains in West Germany.

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Pastor Scharf of Berlin was re-elected president of the Council of the Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU) at its meeting this month in Berlin. Pastor Beckmann of Düsseldorf was re-elected vice-president.

E.P.S., Geneva

DocumentStatement on Church and Press

The common problems of Christian journalists was the subject of a conference at the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches near Geneva, from June 6 - 10 (see EPS No. 23). Called by the WCC's Department of Information, the sessions brought together thirty-eight journalists from ten European countries. The following is a statement on "Church and Press", which was received by the conference.

Church Papers

1. The Christian press, even when it is explicitly interpreting the Church and its work, must not rest content in solely acting as a reflection of the thinking and policy of the leadership within our various churches. In partnership with our church governments and in the spirit of loyalty to the Church, Christian journalists working on these papers should strive to bring to bear on the Church's own life, and its task in bringing the Gospel to the outsider, the truth and cutting edge contained in the Gospel. In this way they will be accepting their responsibility of participating in the entire prophetic and missionary work of the Christian community in modern Europe.
2. As journalists, those working within the staffs of church papers must, at the same time, be objective and scrupulous as members of their profession. Their responsibility to their colleagues demands that they should be good journalists. In this way they can also be good Christians, more especially as they seek fresh and adventurous ways of expressing the Christian message for all their fellow men.
3. The ministry of the journalist is obviously distinct from that of a pastor, teacher or social worker. While it demands a keen awareness of the great theological issues forming the basis of Christian judgment, there can be no imaginative and thorough explanation of what these issues are without specialised and expert professional training.
4. We suggest that the leaders of our churches should make greater provision for this distinctive ministry in the building up and wider mission of our churches. To make this possible we believe that our churches should urgently and seriously endeavour to provide training facilities and budgets proportionate to the immense importance of the press in today's world. The Church has not yet seen all the possibilities of using its press for strengthening its public witness.
5. Wherever there are independent papers which are also concerned to serve the Church, they should be recognised and encouraged by the churches as a necessary stimulus to the Christian community and in the world of journalism.

The Press in General

Those Christians who are working in the press who have come to Bossey from many European countries and churches have come to recognise that the forming of public opinion in modern mass society is encountering more and more obstacles. The development of newspaper techniques, the influence of big organisations, groups, political parties, supra-national organisations and the uncritical use of public opinion surveys often hinder a responsible journalist from exercising his proper role in the formation of public opinion. A misunderstanding of the real task of the press by church leaders is often observed and has a similar effect. Such an influence from state and Church often prevents the emergence of a common mind as public opinion is formed. On the other hand, those who form

public opinion in the Church, and in the press at large, yield before this and other pressures or are forced into a position where they think they have no alternative but to give in to it.

Thus, in this way, the distinction between the facts, the reporting of the facts and comment is sometimes blurred, and the integrity of the journalist's work is endangered. Conformism threatens to do less than justice to the requirements of the reading public, and intentionally or unintentionally encourages a restricted and provincial frame of mind. The journalist may easily become a tool in the hand of particular interests. Even where this development is not yet pronounced, we must be prepared to face these dangers.

Both trends - the influence of pressure groups and conformism on the part of journalists - imply for state and Church the menace that they might lose one of the safeguards of democracy - a free press. The continued existence of responsible societies depends in large measure on good professional work by men and women who are answerable to the dictates of conscience.

We would hope:

1. That journalists, publishers and editors should clearly recognise their critical, constructive and self-critical function in society.
2. That the churches should give a lead in safeguarding freedom of comment in general and especially where the churches are themselves concerned.
3. That the churches, in cooperation with public bodies and editors, should protect the sphere of free comment against any intrusion.
4. That the churches should endeavour to approach the journalist pastorally and aid him in his work, so that he may responsibly and courageously discharge his vocation. In no circumstances should the growing complexity of the world situation be taken as a pretext for churches, governments or editors to refrain from enabling the journalist to convey enough information to his readers to give a balanced interpretation of current problems.
5. That churches and journalists should guard against the manipulation or misuse of the Gospel as a weapon in the cold war in East and West. E.P.S., Geneva